

Desmond FitzGerald; Official With CIA, Dies

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Desmond FitzGerald, deputy director of operations for the Central Intelligence Agency, died of a heart attack yesterday while en route to the Fauquier County Hospital, Warrenton. He was 57.

Mr. FitzGerald collapsed during a tennis match at his country home near The Plains, Va. His home in Washington was at 1671 34th St. NW.

Most persons outside the agency had never heard of Mr. FitzGerald, so little-publicized were his responsibilities and power.

Corporate Lawyer

Mr. FitzGerald was a corporate lawyer with the New York firm of Spence, Hopkins, Walser, Hotchkiss & Angell, before joining the agency. He was a graduate of Harvard University and its law school. His practice in his native New York prior to World War II was termed "brilliant" by a long-time colleague:

"He was the kind of man who left the practice of law at age 31 to enlist as a private in the Army" because there was a war on, a friend said. He was discharged as a major.

His four years in the Army, mostly in the China-Burma-India theater, gave him his first experience in intelligence work.

After attending the Command and General Staff School, he worked behind enemy lines often, and served as a liaison officer for Chinese troops in the Burma campaign.

Eventually he became operations officer for security for the Chinese Combat Command in Nanking. When he was discharged he held the rank of major and a Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster.

On his return to law practice in New York, Mr. FitzGerald "found it dull," a friend said, in comparison with his Army years. He became active in the American Veterans Committee.

After the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, he joined the CIA. Those years were a time of expansion for the agency,



DESMOND FITZGERALD

and many of Mr. FitzGerald's friends also came to Washington, many to work for CIA.

"Very Committed"

"He was very committed to the survival of this country in a difficult world," another friend commented.

Fifteen years after Mr. FitzGerald joined CIA, he replaced Richard Helms as deputy director for operations.

When he came to the agency in 1951, he served as a station chief in the Philippine Islands and Japan. Then in 1961, he was made director of Latin American operations in the shuffling that followed the CIA's ill-fated Bay of Pigs operation, an invasion of Castro Cuba by a force of Cuban exiles.

His quick and incisive mind was his most exceptional quality, combined with a courage in making decisions and an honesty and fair-mindedness in dealing with people, colleagues said.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey said today:

"He was an unusually brilliant and sensitive public servant whose loss will be deeply felt by the U.S. government. For more than 15 years, the American people have received dedicated, selfless and highly professional service from this patriotic American. . . ."

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze called Mr. FitzGerald "hardly replaceable . . . he combined a unique balance of dash, courage, care and wisdom."

Mr. FitzGerald leaves his wife, formerly head of the Washington Hearing and Speech Center; two daughters, Frances and Joan; a son, Desmond Jr., and a stepdaughter, Barbara Mary Lawrence.

Friends may call to 10 p.m. today and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. tomorrow at Joseph Gawler's Sons Funeral Home, Wisconsin Avenue and Harrison Street NW.

Services will be at 4 p.m. tomorrow at the Bethlehem Chapel, Washington Cathedral. Burial will be private.

The family requests that expressions of sympathy be in the form of contributions to the Children's Hearing and Speech Center of Washington, D.C., affiliated with Children's Hospital or to St. Mark's School, Southboro, Mass.